

Comprehensive Urban Forestry Plan | Ongoing Challenges related to the overall Urban Forest

Urban Forestry Board Working Group | Tuesday December 4th, 2012 & Monday December 10th, 2012

Working Group Goal

The goal of this working session was to create statements that described the top three to four ongoing challenges that obstruct the City of Austin from achieving each vision component. These statements will be used in the Comprehensive Urban Forestry Plan's section on the State of Austin's Urban Forest to identify general areas for improvement for the City.

Working Group Process

Using the Urban Forestry Board's Retreat results as the ground work for this collaborative process, the working group crafted priority challenges for each of the six vision categories. Two UFB working group meetings were held followed by a week-long review and comment period.

Results of the Working Group

VISION

Austin's urban forest is a healthy and sustainable mix of trees, vegetation, and other components that comprise a contiguous and thriving ecosystem valued, protected, and cared for by the City and all of its citizens as an essential environmental, economic, and community asset.

1. **CONTIGUOUS:** a contiguous urban forest is composed of interconnected, forested corridors for transportation, community, recreation and wildlife throughout the city.
 - Ongoing Challenges
 - Lack of Integrated land classification and management of public lands
 - Fragmented regional comprehensive planning/land classification
 - Competing land use/urban development patterns
2. **PROTECTED:** trees and environmental features are protected utilizing sustainable site design and land management practices so that long-term ecosystem health is maintained
 - Ongoing Challenges
 - Insufficient resources to promote and enforce tree regulations
 - Misperception of what a sustainable site is
 - Insufficient mechanism to update standards and specifications for tree protection and sustainable site design.
3. **HEALTHY ECOSYSTEM:** a healthy urban forest is comprised of a diverse, native, and uneven-aged palette of species and structure adapted to the unique growing conditions of ecosystem types
 - Ongoing Challenges
 - Lack of education and/or utilization of ecosystem-specific appropriate species
 - Lack of comprehensive inventory
 - Lack of coordinated effort to create a comprehensive locally and regional planting plan that supports diversity of age and species
 - Lack of resources to accomplish the above things.

4. VALUED: a valued urban forest is recognized as essential for the long term well being of the community and the ecosystem
 - Ongoing Challenges – TBD
 - Lack of local government and public awareness and education of the benefits and value of the urban forest
 - Inadequate methods for quantifying the ecosystem services and the financial benefits of the urban forest
 - City government does not value trees as a public utility deserving of associated funds and regulations

5. THRIVING: a thriving urban forest is one that is optimized according to site and ecosystem capacity
 - Ongoing Challenges
 - Biotic and abiotic stressors, i.e. invasive species, urban soil, and climate change
 - Lack of financial resources for expanding the urban forest to optimal capacity
 - Attrition of urban forest due to competing land uses and site design
 - Lack of quantitative and qualitative information about the urban forest resource

6. CARED FOR: a well-cared for urban forest is proactively managed for health, longevity, and safety
 - Ongoing Challenges
 - Lack of resources prevents proactive urban forest maintenance
 - Large size and complexity of City of Austin and ecosystem
 - Lack of coordinated urban forest planning and management effort on a citywide scale
 - Lack of education